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Sub-Saharan Africa: Trends in Refugee Migration



A Research Paper

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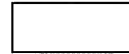
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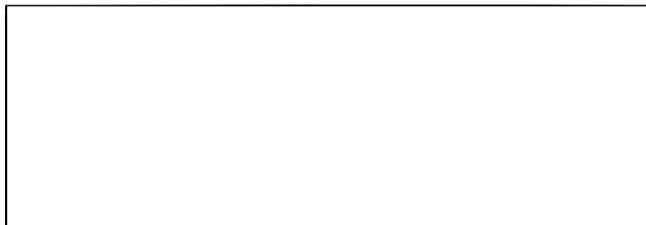
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Sub-Saharan Africa: Trends in Refugee Migration



A Research Paper



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**Sub-Saharan Africa:
Trends in Refugee
Migration** ☐

Summary

*Information available
as of 8 April 1992
was used in this report.*

Famine, civil war, and ethnic violence have driven Sub-Saharan Africa's refugee count by the end of 1991 to about 5 million, nearly one-third of the world's refugee total. Large refugee flows and the need for receiving countries to support refugees in remote and generally barren areas have contributed to turmoil across vast regions. We believe several critical humanitarian crises will continue through 1992 and into next year:

- About 1.3 million Ethiopians, Sudanese, and Somalis are currently refugees. Although the end of the Ethiopian civil war has set the scene for repatriation, we believe ongoing conflict in Sudan and Somalia will keep the region in turmoil, generating new refugees.
- Civil war in Liberia caused the sudden move of over 650,000 Liberian refugees into Guinea, Sierra Leone, Ivory Coast, and other neighboring countries. Mass repatriation will probably be delayed, in our judgment, until combatants are disarmed and relief goods for repatriates are available throughout Liberia.
- Mozambique's neighbors are sheltering 1.4 million Mozambican refugees from the devastation of the 15-year-old civil war, with more than 900,000 of them in Malawi. We believe few refugees will return until a cease-fire is signed and international agencies can guarantee assistance and safety at home, conditions that probably will not be met over the coming year.
- Nearly 400,000 Rwandans, mostly Tutsis, are refugees in Uganda, Burundi, Tanzania, and Zaire, and some 200,000 Burundian Hutus are refugees in Tanzania and Rwanda. Continuing ethnic conflict will probably deter large-scale return of refugees this year, although we believe preparations by international agencies for future repatriation will continue. ☐

Moreover, new refugee flows are likely as a result of deepening drought or from a breakdown of civil order, such as the recent flight of Zairians into Uganda when insecure conditions and hunger threatened their lives in eastern Zaire. ☐

Although the number of African refugees is daunting and repatriation unlikely for most in the short term, chances are good that some long-standing refugee populations will be repatriated this year. The repatriation of South African exiles will probably be completed this year, and we expect

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many Angolan refugees—there are some 300,000 in Zaire and another 100,000 in Zambia—to repatriate as well. Repatriation will not reduce the humanitarian burden for the international community, however, as resettlement will probably be costly and bring new challenges to both relief agencies and the home countries. ☐

Donors and relief agencies warn that internally displaced people without adequate care—destitute migrants within a country—also are potential refugees and, in fact, often cross international borders to find food and safety, thereby swelling officially recognized refugee populations. Relief experts estimate that the number of such displaced Africans probably equals or surpasses the size of the continent's refugee populations. For instance, at the end of the Ethiopian conflict, victorious Eritrean rebels expelled from Eritrea several hundred thousand ex-soldiers, their families, and former government officials and left them without food, water, or shelter. There are another 3-4 million displaced people in Sudan, over 1 million in Liberia, 3 million in Mozambique, and hundreds of thousands in Sierra Leone and Angola. Unlike the attention given refugees, there is no established international assistance network to support displaced persons, and governments are often more interested in covering up the problem than in asking for emergency assistance for homeless and hungry citizens within their own borders. Nevertheless, many relief agencies are starting to provide some displaced populations with some of the same aid that refugees receive. ☐

Humanitarian refugee assistance will become more costly and complex over the next year. Prolonged refugee situations and increasing repatriation requirements are already taxing the resources of relief agencies and governments, and new burdens—such as care for displaced persons, local populations in refugee-affected areas, and vulnerable groups within refugee populations—will require additional resources. Indeed, relief officials are beginning to add the cost of assisting local people in refugee-affected areas to refugee program budgets, recognizing that local people often provide refugees with at least initial care and shelter. Donors will also be asked to increase funding of special programs for refugee women and children—often the victims of brutality, abuse, or neglect in refugee settings—such as separate and secure shelter in the camps, supplemental food beyond the customary ration, and some education and vocational training. ☐

We believe that Africa's refugee populations will continue to demand vast outlays of funding from donors, especially the United States. Refugee migrations as a consequence of ongoing conflicts in Mozambique, Liberia, and Somalia are likely to continue. At the same time, financing will be needed for repatriations to Angola and South Africa, where conflicts have

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diminished or been resolved. The international donor community, relief organizations, and the governments of affected countries will probably look to the United States—the largest donor to international refugee programs, with 1991 contributions of food and more than \$268 million—to increase funding for humanitarian programs. Washington's leading role in the donor community also will keep it in the forefront of setting assistance priorities so that better organized and sustainable refugee programs can be developed.

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~~Confidential~~**Scope Note**

This Research Paper examines key refugee problems in Sub-Saharan Africa and the progress toward their resolution. The paper concentrates on regional, large-scale refugee flows and on refugee-related issues, such as displaced persons, refugee-affected communities, and the specialized problems of refugee women and children.

Most information, however, remains inconsistent and fragmented, and only rarely is available to record the initial stages of sudden, unexpected refugee flows. Moreover, both receiving and sending countries often consider the condition and treatment of refugees, as well as their repatriation and resettlement, to be politically sensitive. As a result, they often prohibit access to refugee relief groups and constrain reporting by diplomats and humanitarian agencies. Given the frequent desire of African governments to avoid international publicity for the condition of their own citizens, as well as their frequent efforts to deny outsiders knowledge of related internal crises, statistics for displaced persons and refugee-affected local populations are sometimes even more fragmentary and difficult to collect.

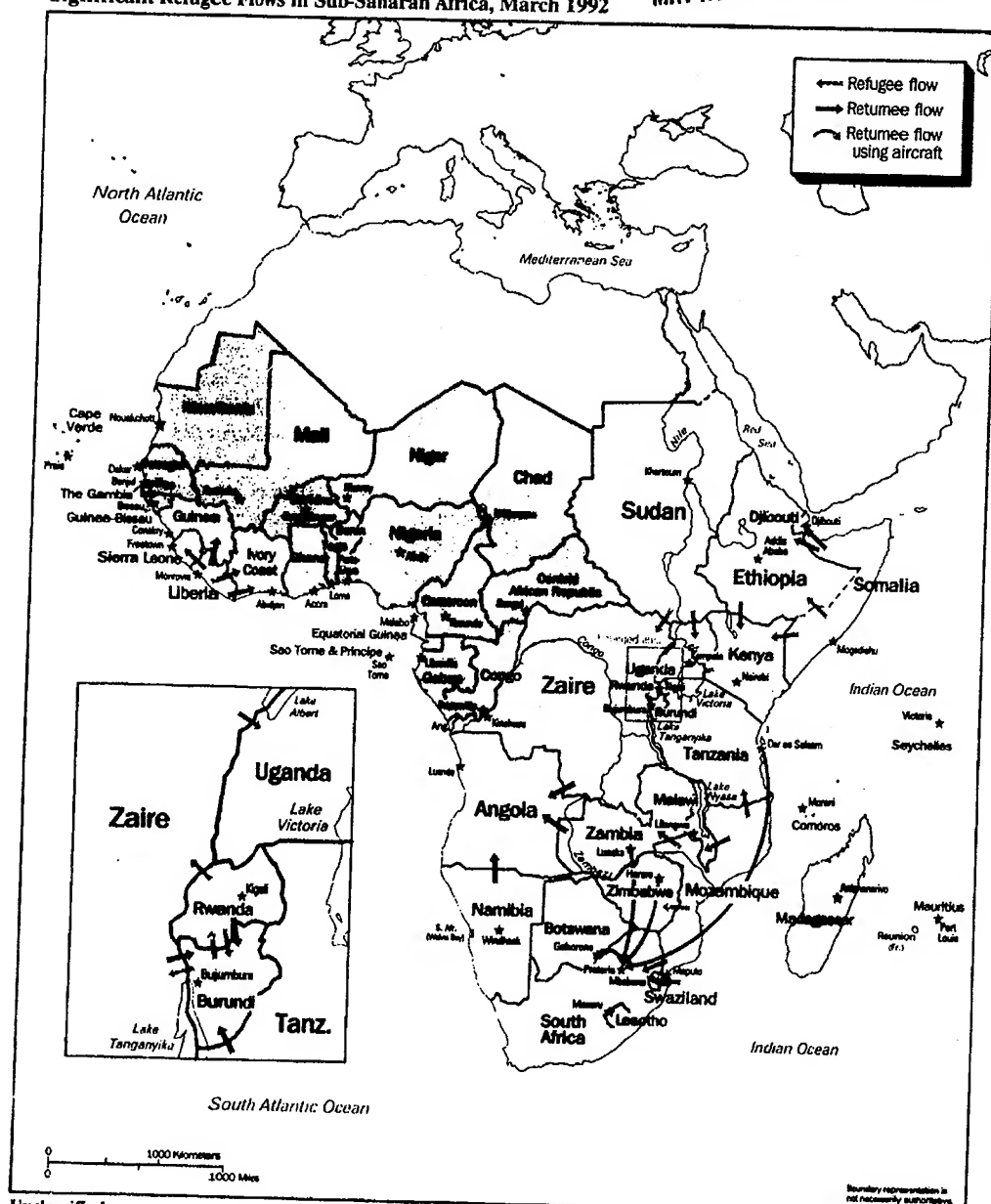
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Figure 1
Significant Refugee Flows in Sub-Saharan Africa, March 1992

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Sub-Saharan Africa: Trends In Refugee Migration

Introduction

Civil conflicts—and sometimes the difficult transition to peace following civil war—as well as ethnic violence, recurring drought, and the threat of famine have generated Africa's huge refugee population, now at an historical high of about 5 million and growing. This spiraling number of refugees in Africa is compounding demands on the resources of international donors and humanitarian agencies that are trying to cope with a worldwide refugee population of 15 to 17 million, double the number of 10 years ago. Humanitarian aid is focused on security, food, shelter, and eventual repatriation for some refugees, such as those returning to South Africa and Angola. Moreover, as refugee situations have become more complex, humanitarian agencies have begun to assist persons displaced within their own countries—whose numbers may equal those of refugees—and adversely affected local populations in refugee settlement areas; until recently, both categories have been largely ignored.

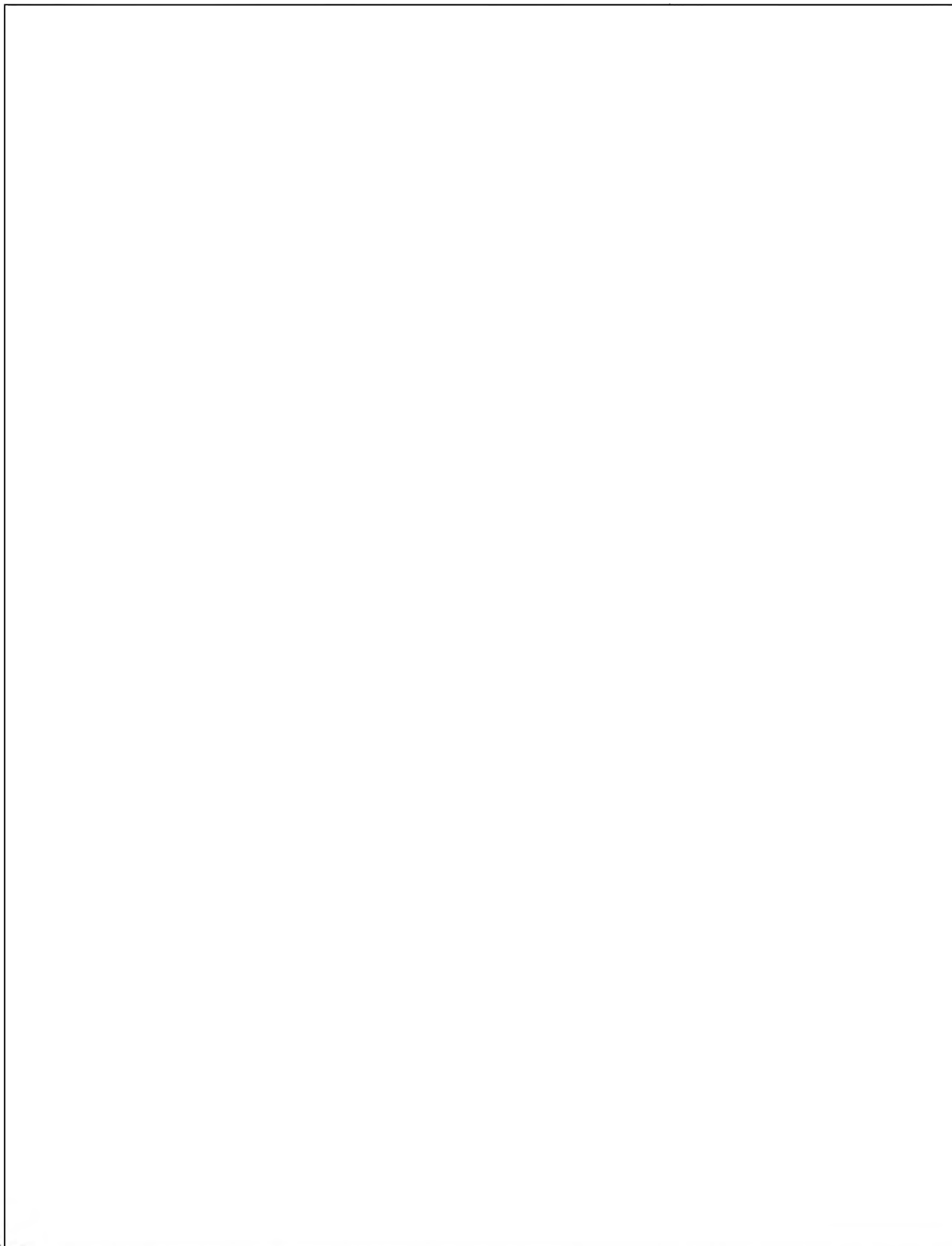
than a million Mozambicans have sought refuge in neighboring countries since the mid-1980s; about 600,000 Rwandans and Burundians are refugees in the region while over 10,000 South African exiles and hundreds of thousands of Angolans sheltered in surrounding countries are seeking return to their homeland. New refugee flows as a result of civil unrest or hunger could also occur. For instance, Zaire's political crisis led to a breakdown of government control in eastern provinces and the flight of about 30,000 Zairian refugees to Ugandan border villages this year. Refugees cited increased banditry and harassment from ill-disciplined troops as reasons for leaving their homes (see appendix).

Major Refugee Problems

We believe that Sub-Saharan Africa's most pressing refugee problems are now in the Horn, Liberia, Mozambique, Rwanda, and Burundi. While the cause and size of refugee flows vary, nearly all have provoked serious difficulties in both sending and receiving countries. Not only has the size of refugee migrations increased substantially in recent years, they have also become multinational. In the area of the Horn, for instance, Ethiopian refugees have fled to Sudan, Somalia, Djibouti, and Kenya at the same time that Ethiopia has become a haven for Sudanese and Somali refugees; Sudanese refugees have also crossed into Kenya and Zaire, and Somalis have entered Kenya and Djibouti. In West Africa, the flight of Liberian refugees, one of the continent's largest and fastest migrations, has plunged its neighbors into a morass of humanitarian problems. In the south, more

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mid-1991 when the rebels accused the Rwandan Government of stalling reconciliation talks and resumed fighting, international interest in a regionally achieved refugee solution remains high, and UNHCR has begun planning for repatriation when peace is restored. ☐

Meanwhile, Burundi is trying to repatriate its 200,000 strong Hutu refugee population and is seeking financial support from Western donors for the returnees. Although an estimated 5,000 Hutu refugees were repatriated from Tanzania, Rwanda, and Zaire in 1991, according to UNHCR, a new outbreak of ethnic violence in late 1991 between Hutu extremists and government forces caused another 40,000 Hutus to flee to Rwanda and Zaire and significantly slowed the return refugee flow. ☐

Rwanda and Burundi

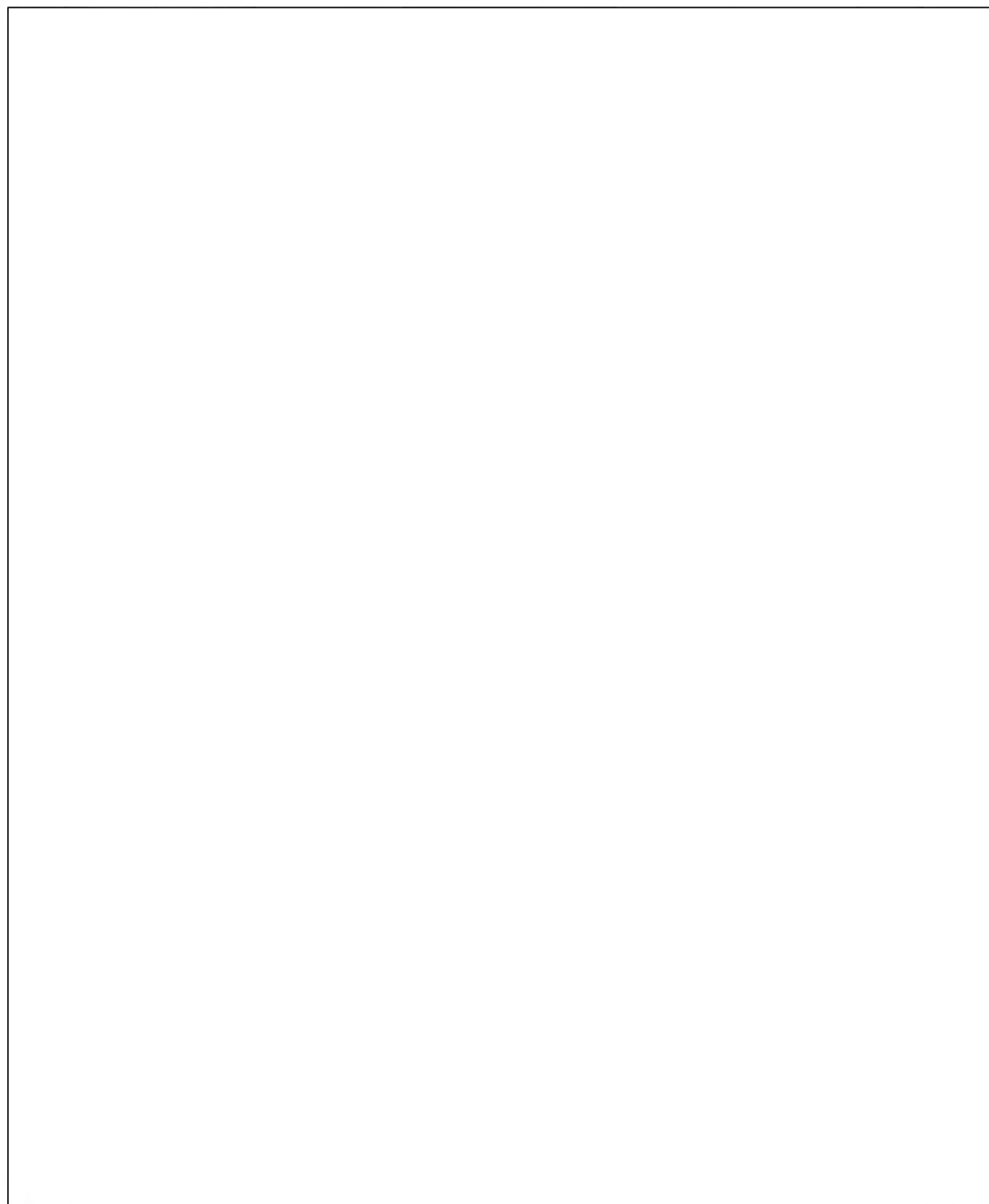
A resurgence of ethnic conflict over the past year between the majority Hutu ethnic group and less numerous though traditionally dominant Tutsis has caused an upsurge in regional instability and large-scale refugee flight. An invasion of Rwanda by some 2,000 to 3,000 armed Rwandan refugees from Uganda in 1990 compounded the problems already associated with an estimated 400,000 Rwandans, mostly Tutsis, who are self-settled refugees in Uganda, Burundi, Tanzania, and Zaire and some 200,000 Burundian Hutus in Tanzania, Rwanda, and Zaire.¹ ☐

Multilateral efforts to reach a solution to refugee problems in the region culminated when the heads of state of Rwanda, Burundi, Uganda, and Tanzania, and the Prime Minister of Zaire met in early 1991—the first time that top leaders of African countries affected by refugee problems had sought jointly to resolve their difficulties. They called for a cease-fire in the guerrilla war as a prerequisite for either refugee repatriation or integration into asylum countries. Although progress toward peace sustained a setback in

¹ The core of the rebel force that invaded Rwanda is composed largely of Rwandan Tutsi refugees who were recruited into the Ugandan National Resistance Army (NRA) beginning in the late 1970s. The initial invasion force of NRA deserters was joined by additional Tutsi refugees and other disaffected Tutsi and even Hutus in Rwanda and neighboring states. ☐

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~~Confidential~~**Displaced Persons, Specialized Refugee Issues**

The international donor community increasingly recognizes the need to channel relief to such specific groups as displaced persons, who would further swell refugee ranks if left unaided, and refugee-impacted communities. Agencies are also tailoring some relief programs to meet the special needs of refugee women and children.

Displaced Persons

War and food shortages cause most displacement. For example, fighting between rebels and Rwandan forces has displaced many along the Ugandan-Rwandan border.

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Outlook and Implications for the United States

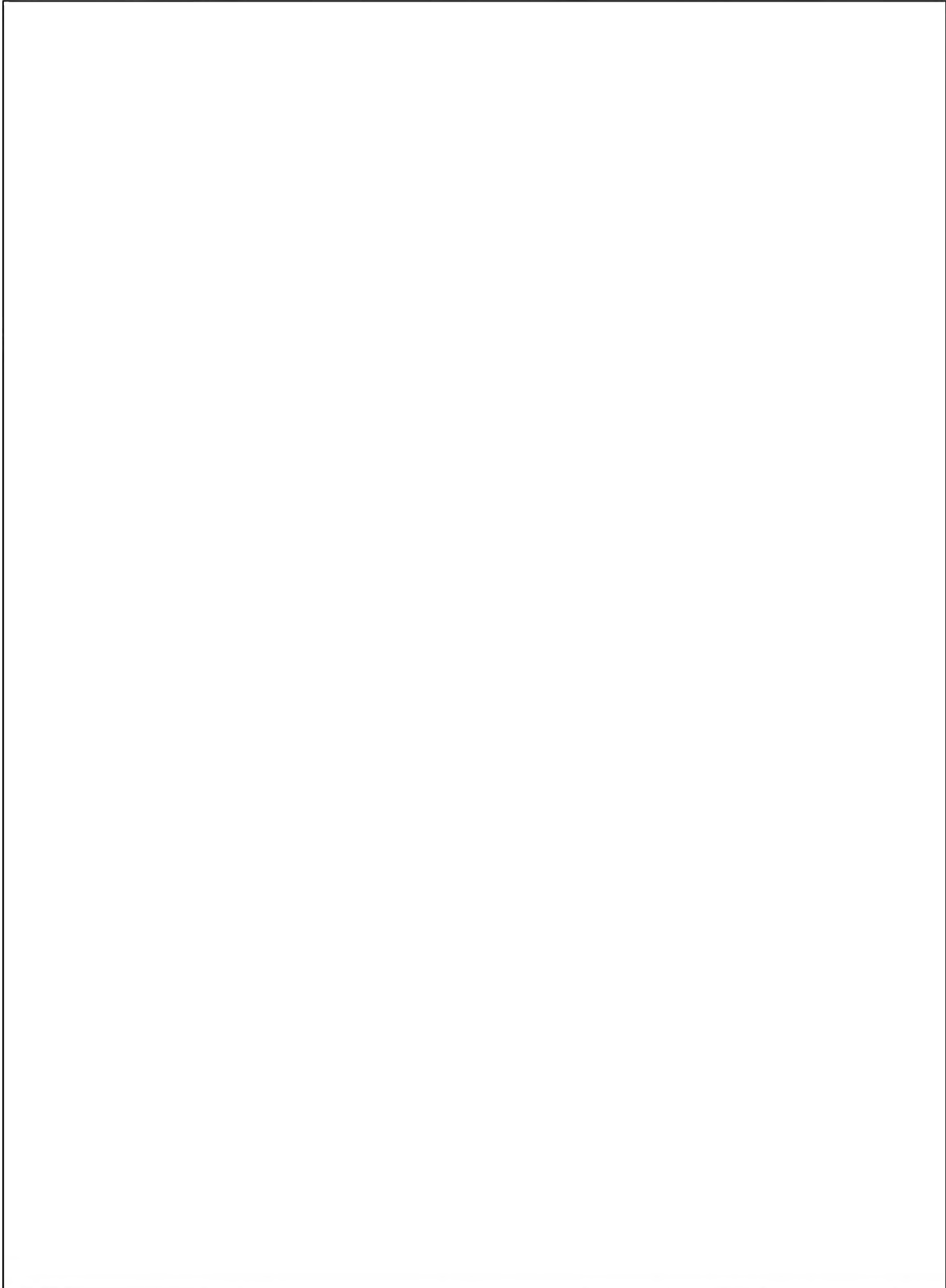
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Despite international efforts to resolve the respective conflicts, we believe continuing ethnic tensions in Liberia and the Rwanda-Burundi region will probably preclude mass repatriations there in 1992. Although UNHCR has plans to repatriate Liberians this year in time for farmers to prepare the land for planting in December, we believe the Liberian refugees are likely to wait until domestic factions are disarmed and relief sites are in place, conditions that are unlikely to prevail soon enough for a late 1992 repatriation. The promise of ethnic reconciliation and political reform in Rwanda has not been enough to lure home its large refugee population, and setbacks in regional peace talks between rebels and Kigali will deter large-scale repatriations. Renewed ethnic violence in Burundi in late 1991, just as repatriations from Tanzania were getting under way, will undoubtedly discourage many who would return. ☐

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Appendix

Sub-Saharan Africa: Estimated
Numbers of Refugees by Asylum
Country and Country of Origin,
December 1991

Estimating Refugees

Reliable estimates of the numbers of refugees in Africa are difficult to formulate. The UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), usually in collaboration with host governments, provides refugee estimates that are most often used by the international and donor community. Nevertheless, the chaotic conditions surrounding refugee movements, the political and economic sensitivities weighing on both refugee sending and receiving countries, and the need of donor countries to justify levels of relief aid often precipitate sharp disagreements between the estimates and the perceived "true" numbers. ☐

Refugee numbers can change rapidly as new influxes occur or as refugees slip away from camps to return home or integrate into local populations. These movements are rarely documented amid the turmoil characteristic of refugee concentrations. When complete or partial head counts are made at a later time, it is

seldom possible to account for changes owing to births, deaths, or movements in the earlier refugee population, thereby casting doubt on both sets of numbers. Other discrepancies arise when enumerators define refugees using significantly different criteria; especially troublesome are instances involving large numbers of illegal aliens, many of whom often may consider themselves refugees but few of whom have formally sought asylum. Agencies report with more confidence and accuracy the numbers for whom aid is provided, giving estimates of actual recipients or "registered" refugees. Here too, however, fraudulent information from the refugees themselves or padding by local officials—who later sell surplus rations and relief goods—distort the count.² ☐

² The data in this appendix have been compiled by the US Department of State from a variety of US and international sources and reflect the best available estimates as of December 1991. In most instances, they are counts of those considered refugees by the national government and/or the UNHCR. ☐

Sub-Saharan Africa Refugee Migration

Asylum Country	Country of Origin	Estimated Number of Refugees	Asylum Country	Country of Origin	Estimated Number of Refugees
Total	4,892,381				
Angola		10,557		Chad	188
	Zaire	9,212		Ghana	63
	South Africa	1,100		Liberia	27
	Namibia	245		Other countries	86
Benin		15,850	Burundi		319,063
	Togo	15,000		Rwanda	268,639
	Chad	800		Zaire	50,000
	Other countries	50		Somalia	24
Botswana		1,348		Other countries	400
	South Africa	989	Cameroon		1,400
	Angola	164		Chad	1,000
	Lesotho	12		Other countries	400
	Namibia	5	Central African Republic		11,022
	Other countries	178		Sudan	10,000
Burkina		364		Chad	962
				Other countries	60

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Sub-Saharan Africa Refugee Migration (continued)

Asylum Country	Country of Origin	Estimated Number of Refugees	Asylum Country	Country of Origin	Estimated Number of Refugees
Congo		3,370	Lesotho		230
	Chad	2,300		All countries	230
	Zaire	340	Liberia		12,038
	Central African Republic	300		Sierra Leone	12,000
	Rwanda	150		Sudan	29
	Burundi	100		Other countries	9
	Cameroon	60	Malawi		980,000
	Other countries	120		Mozambique	980,000
Djibouti		106,726	Mali		8,000
	Somalia	94,154		Mauritania	8,000
	Ethiopia	12,572	Mauritania		40,000
Ethiopia		534,000		Senegal	22,000
	Somalia	519,000		Mali	18,000
	Sudan	15,000	Mozambique		350
Gabon		800		South Africa	150
	Sao Tome and Principe	200		Other countries	200
	Angola	200	Namibia		30,200
	Equatorial Guinea	200		Angola	30,000
	Other countries	200		Other countries	200
Gambia, The		800	Niger		1,400
	Liberia	300		Chad	1,400
	Senegal	500	Nigeria		4,415
Ghana		6,130		Liberia	2,500
	Liberia	6,000		Chad	1,500
	Other countries	130		Ghana	200
Guinea-Bissau		3,500		Namibia	65
	Senegal	3,500		Other countries	150
Guinea		547,560	Rwanda		23,500
	Liberia	404,960		Burundi	23,500
	Sierra Leone	142,600	Senegal		63,100
Ivory Coast		238,092		Mauritania	58,000
	Liberia	237,562		Guinea-Bissau	5,000
	Benin	160		Other countries	100
	Ghana	100	Sierra Leone		10,008
	Chad	70		Liberia	10,000
	Other countries	200		Other countries	8
Kenya		72,000	Somalia		50,000
	Somalia	65,000			
	Ethiopia	5,000			
	Other countries	2,000			

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Sub-Saharan Africa Refugee Migration
(continued)

Asylum Country	Country of Origin	Estimated Number of Refugees	Asylum Country	Country of Origin	Estimated Number of Refugees
	Ethiopia	50,000	Zaire		472,797
South Africa		250,000		Angola	308,242
	Mozambique	250,000		Sudan	110,000
Sudan		379,500		Burundi	30,000
	Ethiopia	350,000		Rwanda	12,746
	Chad	20,000		Uganda	10,009
	Uganda	5,000		Zambia	500
	Zaire	4,500		Other countries	1,300
Swaziland		30,850	Zambia		143,440
	Mozambique	24,500		Angola	103,000
	South Africa	6,000		Zaire	9,300
	Other countries	350		Mozambique	25,400
Tanzania		265,550		South Africa	3,000
	Burundi	155,000		Namibia	140
	Mozambique	72,000		Other countries	2,600
	Rwanda	22,300	Zimbabwe		91,444
	Zaire	16,000		Mozambique	90,912
	Other countries	250		Other countries	532
Togo		477			
	Ghana	294			
	Liberia	104			
	Other countries	79			
Uganda		162,500			
	Rwanda	81,600			
	Sudan	80,000			
	Zaire	550			
	Kenya	250			
	Other countries	100			

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